THE LAST STAND OF MR. NEGATIVE

SINCE SPIDER-MAN'S RETURN FROM A SELF-IMPOSED EXILE, ONE OF THE BIGGEST THORNS IN HIS SIDE HAS BEEN A MYSTERIOUS CRIME BOSS, MR. NEGATIVE. LITTLE IS KNOWN OF NEGATIVE'S PAST, BUT HIS CURRENT INTENTIONS SEEM TO BE A PLAY TO TAKE CONTROL OF NEW YORK CITY'S CRIME WORLD – AND IN THE WORLD OF NORMAN OSBORN'S DARK REIGN, THAT FIGHT WILL PROVE TO BE MORE BRUTAL AND COSTLY THAN EVER BEFORE.

COST SEEMS TO BE ONE NON-OBJECT FOR THE LIKES OF MR. NEGATIVE, HOWEVER, AS HIS SECRET IDENTITY IS MARTIN LI – BILLIONAIRE PHILANTHROPIST AND THE BOSS OF MAY PARKER, PETER PARKER'S AUNT. WHATEVER NEGATIVE'S NEXT MOVE IS, PARKER WILL INEVITABLY BE DRAWN INTO THE FIGHT, AS EITHER FRIEND OF MARTIN LI OR WEB-SLINGING ENEMY OF MR. NEGATIVE...

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DARK REIGN: MISTER NEGATIVE No. 1, August, 2009. Published Monthly by MARVEL PUBLISHING, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

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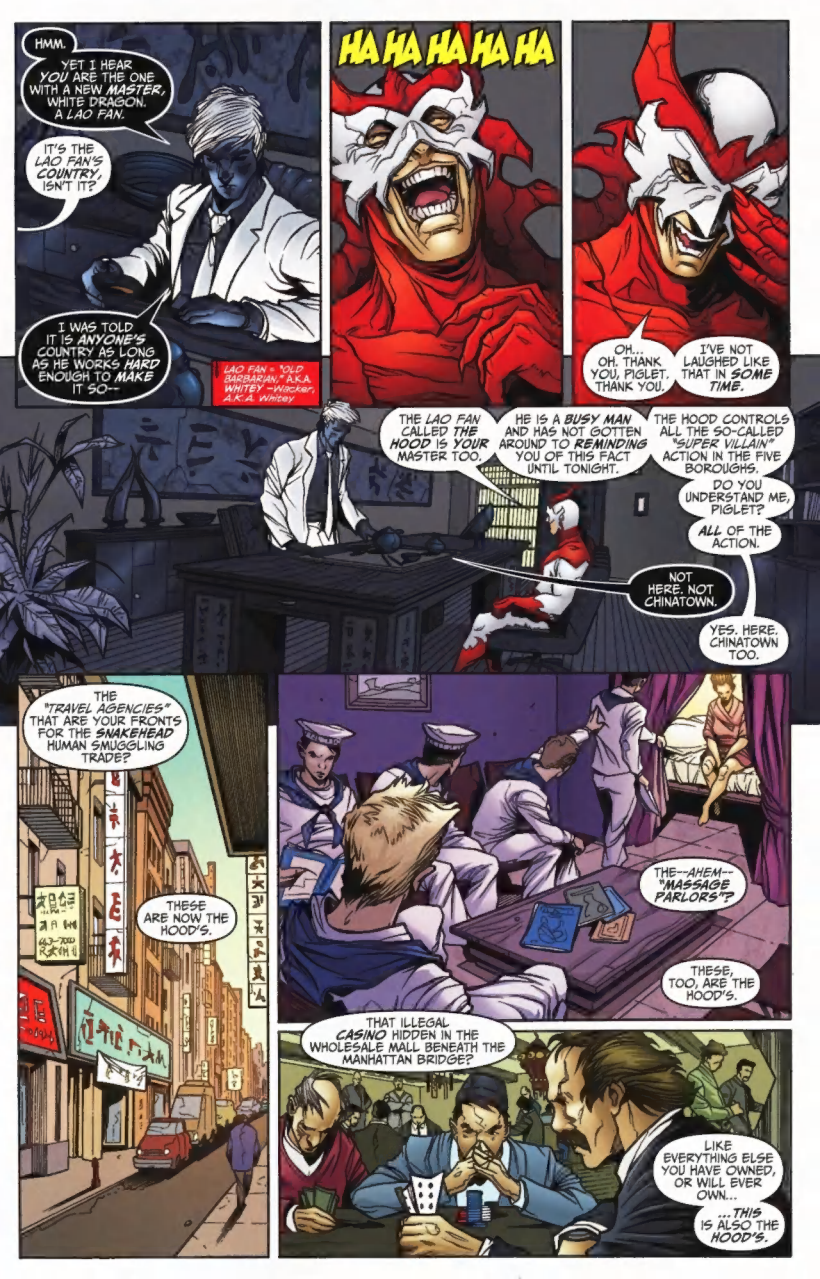
What is a good man?
A teacher of a bad man.
What is a bad man?
A good man's charge.
Know the white,
but keep the black!
~Tao Te Ching (6th Cen. B.C.)
CHINATOWN, N.Y.C.
"ZHU-ZHA."
"PIGLET."
YOU KNOW THIS TERM, FROM HONG KONG?
I CAN'T SAY THAT I DO.
REALLY, MISTER NEGATIVE? BUT THEY SAY YOU HAIL FROM FUJIAN PROVINCE...
THEY SPEAK THE TRUTH.
HUH. THAT IS CURIOUS, THEN...
...FOR "ZHU-ZHA" IS WHAT MY ANCESTORS IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE WOULD HAVE CALLED THE FILTHY FUZHOUNESE PEASANTS THAT WERE YOUR ANCESTORS...
...WHEN WE SOLD THEM INTO SLAVERY, HERE IN AMERICA, OR JAPAN, OR THE CARIBBEAN--ANYWHERE THEY NEEDED FREE LABOR.
ISN'T HISTORY A FASCINATING SUBJECT?


HMM.
YET I HEAR YOU ARE THE ONE WITH A NEW MASTER, WHITE DRAGON. A LAO FAN.
IT'S THE LAO FAN'S COUNTRY, ISN'T IT?
I WAS TOLD IT IS ANYONE'S COUNTRY AS LONG AS HE WORKS HARD ENOUGH TO MAKE IT SO--
LAO FAN = "OLD BARBARIAN," A.K.A. WHITEY --KNICKER, A.K.A. Whitey
HA HA HA HA HA
OH... OH, THANK YOU, PIGLET. THANK YOU.
I'VE NOT LAUGHED LIKE THAT IN SOME TIME.
THE LAO FAN CALLED THE HOOD IS YOUR MASTER TOO.
HE IS A BUSY MAN AND HAS NOT GOTTEN AROUND TO REMINDING YOU OF THIS FACT UNTIL TONIGHT.
THE HOOD CONTROLS ALL THE SO-CALLED "SUPER VILLAIN" ACTION IN THE FIVE BOROUGHS.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, PIGLET?
ALL OF THE ACTION.
NOT HERE. NOT CHINATOWN.
YES. HERE. CHINATOWN TOO.
THE "TRAVEL AGENCIES" THAT ARE YOUR FRONTS FOR THE SNAKEHEAD HUMAN SMUGGLING TRADE?
THESE ARE NOW THE HOOD'S.
THE--AHEM-- "MASSAGE PARLORS"?
THESE, TOO, ARE THE HOOD'S.
THAT ILLEGAL CASINO HIDDEN IN THE WHOLESALE MALL BENEATH THE MANHATTAN BRIDGE?
LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE YOU HAVE OWNED, OR WILL EVER OWN...
...THIS IS ALSO THE HOOD'S.

YOUR TAX FOR OPERATING WITHIN THE LIMITS OF NEW YORK CITY WILL BE SIXTY-FIVE PERCENT OF YOUR GROSS WEEKLY EARNINGS.
AND LET ME GUESS.
YOU AND YOUR DRAGON LORDS WILL SUPERVISE MY OPERATIONS FOR THE HOOD.
BUT OF COURSE. DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?
WE CANTONESE KNOW HOW TO HANDLE YOU FUJIAN PIGLETS.
ALL RIGHT.
...
ALL RIGHT, THEN.
YOU SOUND SURPRISED.
I AM... A LITTLE.
I KNOW HOW HARD YOU WORKED FOR THIS TERRITORY.
I KNEW MANY OF THE MEN YOU KILLED TO GET IT.
MY MEN, IN SUNSET PARK, FOR INSTANCE.
THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.
AS YOU KNOW, I SEEK THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE MAGGIA CRIME FAMILY.
AN ALLIANCE WITH YOUR LAO FAN COULD PROVE MOST USEFUL IN THIS REGARD--
NO "ALLIANCE."
SUBSERVIENCE.
OF COURSE, AS YOU SAY. ALL THAT'S REALLY LEFT TO DO, I THINK...
...IS SHAKE ON IT.
WHAT--
WHAT'RE YOU--?

THE HOOD'S HIDEOUT, HELL'S KITCHEN.
FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER.
MR. NEGATIVE WAS NEVER BORN, SO HE IS EVER LIVING!
BRAKATHOOOM
IF YOU LAO FAN COME TO CHINATOWN, MR. NEGATIVE WILL CHOKE THE STREETS WITH YOUR DEAD!
FWOOOSH
YYAAAHH!
FFSSSSS
GGGGK
ALL TONGS STAND UNITED BEHIND MR. NEGATIVE!
SQUREEE
SHHAK
HE STAYS BEHIND, THUS HE IS AHEAD!
HE IS ATTACHED TO NOTHING, THUS HE IS ONE WITH ALL—

So...here is what we **know.**
Years ago, the cargo steamer *Golden Mountain*, out of Mombassa, approached Rockaway Beach, Queens, in a summer squall.
Her captain desperately tried to raise his contacts in the city on shortwave radio.
Small fishing boats were supposed to rendezvous with *Golden Mountain* in international waters and retrieve her cargo:
About 200 Chinese illegals from Fujian Province, each of whom had spent $30,000 and 112 grim days at sea to reach America.
But the captain received no response from the shore.
The "snakehead," or human smuggler, in charge of *Golden Mountain* feared discovery if they lingered in these waters too long.
He **"persuaded"** the captain to steer close enough to shore so the illegals could jump in and swim for it.
The captain inched toward the beach as carefully as he could...
...until not even the barrel of a gun could make him hazard the shallow waters any further.
So the snakehead himself took the helm...
...and promptly ran aground on a sandbar 300 yards from the local Coast Guard station.
The crew panicked and fled in the only lifeboat.
Eventually, the illegals came out to see what was going on.
And there...they **saw** it.

Little more than twinkling lights through the driving rain. A ghost city.

New York. The West. **Freedom.**

They had lived on handfuls of rice and water for the better part of three months.

The snakeheads had repeatedly taunted and beaten them that whole time.

All suffered from a variety of skin and urinary tract infections due to dehydration.

And, worst of all...

...four of their number had died of pneumonia during the voyage and the corpses had remained with them in their shipping container quarters for the rest of the voyage.

If they waited for rescue by the Coast Guard, they would be deported right back to the place they had risked everything to escape from.

And there was their destination, **there it was,** after so long, and after so many trials and injustices, hovering before their very eyes.

So they decided they had no other choice...

...than to make the final leg of their arduous journey on their **own.**

Night and rain reduced visibility to less than nothing.
There was a strong undertow off the point.
Many, exhausted and disoriented, accidentally swam out to **sea.**
The good people of Rockaway awoke the following morning to find that the tide had brought them unwanted gifts.
All of the 212 would-be immigrants huddled in *Golden Mountain's* shipping containers had drowned.
All, save **one.**
A man named **Martin Li.**
Now, we **know** this story **only** because Martin Li **himself** told it during his acceptance speech for the **Presidential Medal of Freedom.**
Li transformed the Chinatown garment shop he slaved in after his harrowing passage into a financial **empire.**
Nothing like generous donations to both political parties to garner amnesty for one's **"illegal"** status.

I don't mean to sound **too** cynical. Li **also** became a philanthropist beyond compare.

He founded the **F**ood, **E**mergency **A**id, **S**helter and **T**raining Project, one of the most visible and beloved charities in the city.

Unfortunately for Li, my boss, *D.B.* publisher **Dexter Bennett,** isn't too fond of anybody more popular than himself.

Of course, that means he's not too fond of 98% of the world's population, but you didn't hear that from me.

My name is **Betty Brant.**

I'm a **reporter.**

Or, at least, I'm an ex-secretary, an ex-wife... an ex-**lot** of things, **trying** to be a reporter.

So I wasn't exactly **thrilled** when Dexter ordered me to dig up whatever **mud** I could on Li, the **stickier** the better.

Then I made a deep background trip to **Fujian Province.**

MRS. LI?

YES...?

If Martin Li is the world's saintliest humanitarian billionaire...

...why does he make his **wife** live in a fourth-floor walk-up on **East Broadway?**

IT'S ABOUT MARTIN, MA'AM.

YOUR *HUSBAND.*

Now, I've got a pretty straightforward question.

MAY? IT'S MARTIN. HOW ARE YOU?
OH, MARTIN! HELLO! I'M FINE...
...JUST STARTING SUPPER FOR JAY AND MY NEPHEW PETER TONIGHT...
SSSPPP
HMMM, NEED'S MORE CREAMED CORN...
THIS WILL ONLY TAKE A MINUTE. YOU KNOW WE'RE OPENING A F.E.A.S.T. CENTER IN JACKSON HEIGHTS NEXT MONTH?
I WAS HOPING AS MY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR YOU COULD RECOMMEND A NAME OR THREE THAT'D BE READY TO STEP UP AND LEAD THE FOLKS OVER THERE?
MY WORD, MARTIN! DO YOU EVER STOP WORKING?
HA, HA! WHAT IS THE OLD CLICHÉ, MAY...
"...NO REST FOR THE WICKED"?
STICK CLOSE TO ME, SPOT...
...LIGHT-MASTER WILL SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE.
THE ANSWER TOLD ME HE HEARD HOOD SAY I WAS AMONG HIS TOP TWENTY GUYS.
TOP THIRTY, AT LEAST...

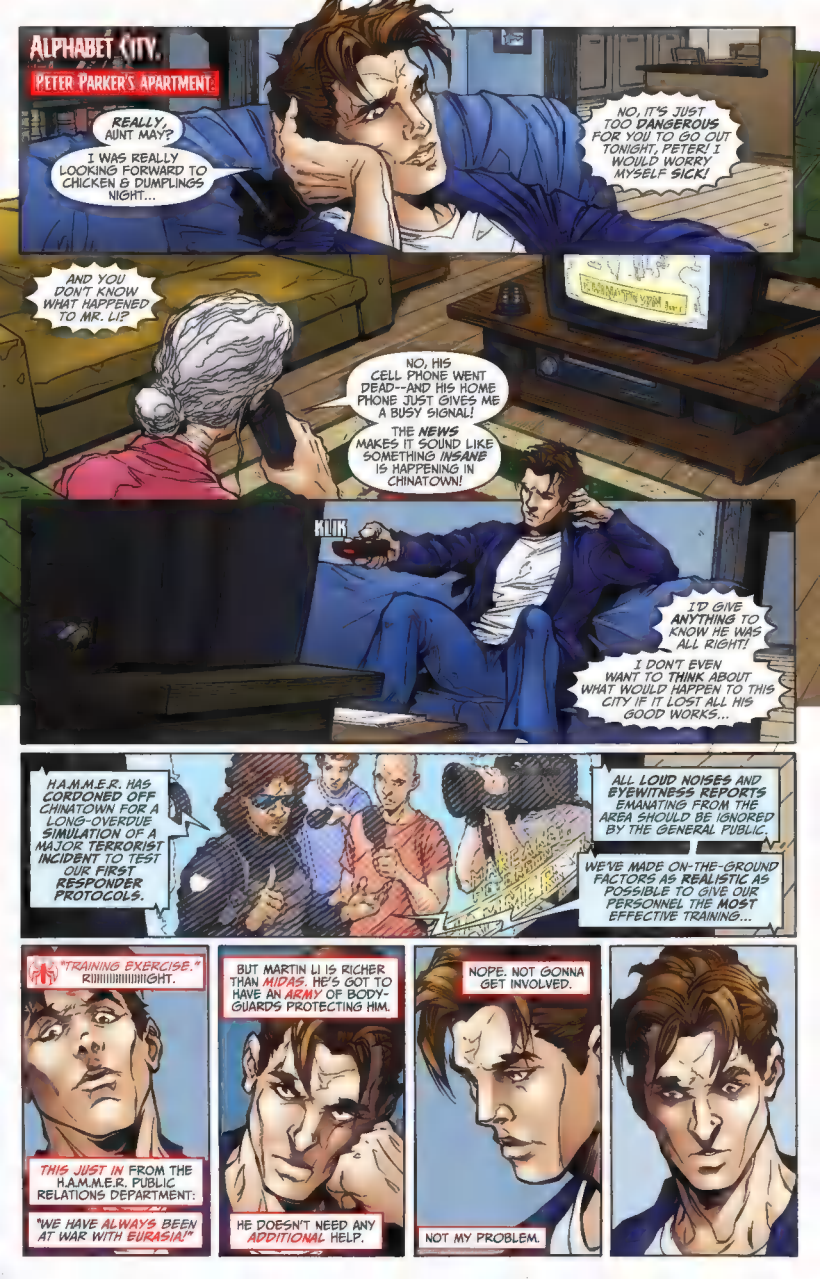
HELLO? ANYONE HOME?
GIVE IT A REST WITH THE LIP, WILL YOU, SPOT?
I CAN BARELY HEAR MYSELF THINK.
HOLD UP! THAT'S ENOUGH! STREET'S CLOSED!
WHAT? BUT THAT LIMO JUST GOT IN--
SKREEEEEEEECH
WHAT DID I JUST TELL YOU, CITIZEN? STEP OUT OF THE CAR!
EAST BROADWAY'S CLOSED 'TIL FURTHER NOTICE BY ORDER OF H.A.M.M.E.R.!
MOVE IT! MOVE IT! LOCK IT DOWN, PEOPLE! NOBODY GETS IN OR OUT!
THAT'S OUR CUE. GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT CONNEX THE HOOD HAS TO BRIBE H.A.M.M.E.R.
FREE PIECE OF ADVICE, SPOT?
NEVER GET ON HIS BAD SIDE.
CHINATOWN, MEET THE STONE AGE.
STONE AGE...

"...MEET CHINATOWN."
KRZZZ
WHA...?
MAY, I HAVE TO GO.
SOMETHING...
SOMETHING VERY BAD IS HAPPENING TO MY NEIGHBORHOOD.
BWA-KOOM
MARTIN, WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT'S THE--
MARTIN!!

-tik-tik-tik-KLIK
IT'S TIME.
IT'S TIME!
WHEN LOGIC AND PROPORTIOONNNN HAVE FALLEEEEEEEEN SLOPPY DEAD
AND THE WHITE KNIGHT IS TALKING BACKWARDS AND THE RED QUEEN'S "OFF WITH HER HEAD!"
WHITE RABBIT!
REEEEEEMEMBER WHAT THE DORMOUSE SAID:
FEEEEEEED YOUR HEAD!
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!
CALL THE BOSS!
FEEEEEEED YOUR HEAD!

SO... HEH... THIS'S A BACHELOR PARTY KIND OF THING, Y'KNOW...
...MY BUDDIES TOOK A POOL FOR IT AN' ALL... I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE, SO I, ER...
...GEEZ, THIS IS EMBARRASSING!..
LOOK, WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS, I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO ASK FOR A, UH...
...HAPPY END--"
SKK!
WHOA!
THAT FEELS... WOW... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING DOWN THERE...
...BUT FOR GOD'S SAKE DON'T EVER STOP...
GGGKKKKK!!
THE SQUID

THERE IS NO MORE MISTER NEGATIVE.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
NOW THERE IS THE HOOD.
NOW THERE IS ONLY THE HOOD.
SCORCHED


ALPHABET CITY.
PETER PARKER'S APARTMENT.
REALLY, AUNT MAY?
I WAS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO CHICKEN & DUMPLINGS NIGHT...
NO, IT'S JUST TOO DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO GO OUT TONIGHT, PETER! I WOULD WORRY MYSELF SICK!
AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO MR. LI?
NO, HIS CELL PHONE WENT DEAD--AND HIS HOME PHONE JUST GIVES ME A BUSY SIGNAL!
THE NEWS MAKES IT SOUND LIKE SOMETHING INSANE IS HAPPENING IN CHINATOWN!
KLIK
I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO KNOW HE WAS ALL RIGHT!
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THIS CITY IF IT LOST ALL HIS GOOD WORKS...
H.A.M.M.E.R. HAS CORDONED OFF CHINATOWN FOR A LONG-OVERDUE SIMULATION OF A MAJOR TERRORIST INCIDENT TO TEST OUR FIRST RESPONDER PROTOCOLS.
ALL LOUD NOISES AND EYEWITNESS REPORTS EMANATING FROM THE AREA SHOULD BE IGNORED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC.
WE'VE MADE ON-THE-GROUND FACTORS AS REALISTIC AS POSSIBLE TO GIVE OUR PERSONNEL THE MOST EFFECTIVE TRAINING...
"TRAINING EXERCISE." RIIIIIIIIIIIIIGHT.
THIS JUST IN FROM THE H.A.M.M.E.R. PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT:
"WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AT WAR WITH EURASIA!"
BUT MARTIN LI IS RICHER THAN MIDAS. HE'S GOT TO HAVE AN ARMY OF BODY-GUARDS PROTECTING HIM.
HE DOESN'T NEED ANY ADDITIONAL HELP.
NOPE. NOT GONNA GET INVOLVED.
NOT MY PROBLEM.

SIGH.
NICE
LIFE
CHINATOWN:
MR. NEGATIVE'S HEADQUARTERS
SKREEEEEEECH

BOSS! YOU'RE HOME!
THE SITUATION IS THIS--
THEY HAVE THE SNAKEHEAD AGENCIES, THE MASSAGE PARLORS, THE GAMBLING DENS-- EVERYTHING!
IT'S A COMPLETE WIPEOUT. WE GOTTA--
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE PRESENT MOMENT, HAMMERHEAD.
I WAS FOREWARNED OF AN ATTACK AND HAVE DEVELOPED A CONTINGENCY PLAN AGAINST IT.
FIRST I NEED TO RETRIEVE THE NECESSARY MATERIAL.
YOU MUST HOLD THE LINE UNTIL I RETURN. CAN YOU DO THAT?
I WILL BE HAMMER AND ANVIL.
THEY WILL BREAK AGAINST ME.
FEAR NOT, MY MOST LOYAL ONES.
WE WERE NEVER BORN.
SSWWEEHH
SO WE CAN NEVER DIE.
YOU HEARD OUR MASTER.
INNER DEMONS!
THE ENEMY IS UPON US!

IF THEY WANT TO TAKE THIS HOUSE--
--MAKE SURE THEY PAY FOR IT!
RRRAAAAAHHH!!!

CHINATOWN.
MARTIN LI'S TOWNHOUSE.
TALK ABOUT YOUR MAN OF THE PEOPLE, LISTING YOUR MANSION IN THE WHITE PAGES...
IS THAT LI? IT'S HIS SILHOUETTE...
BUT MY SPIDER-SENSE IS GOING NUTSO!
DUH, OF COURSE IT IS--AN ARMY OF SUPER-KOOKS IS LEVELING CHINATOWN, FROM THE LOOKS OF IT!
BUT FIRST I'LL MAKE SURE AUNT MAY'S IDOL IS SAFE, THEN I'LL DEAL WITH THAT LITTLE PROBLEM...
MISTER LI?
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED. I'M HERE TO TAKE YOU TO SAFETY--
YAAAHH!
ALL RIGHT, SPIDER-MAN.
I WON'T BE FRIGHTENED.

THIS IS RIDICULOUS, ANSWER!!
THEY JUST KEEP COMING, NO MATTER HOW MANY HOLES WE BLAST IN THEM--THEY'VE GOT A HEALING FACTOR OR SOMETHING!
WAIT, LIGHTMASTER--WAIT!
I HAVE THE ANSWER!
SPOT! USE YOUR 'PORT-HOLES--ON ALL OF THEM!
A HEALING FACTOR WON'T DO THEM MUCH GOOD--
"--IN STATEN ISLAND!"
HAMMERHEAD! YOU STAND ALONE!
GIVE UP NEGATIVE--OR FALL WITH HIM!

MR. NEGATIVE WAS NEVER BORN, SO HE IS EVER LIVING!
HE IS ATTACHED TO NOTHING, THUS ONE WITH ALL!
NOW THAT YOU LAO FAN HAVE COME TO CHINATOWN--
--I WILL CHOKE THE STREETS WITH YOUR DEAD!!
to be continued...

DIGITAL COMICS PRESERVATION

MR. NEGATIVE

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GUGLIOTTA
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